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# THE NATIVE RACES OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA

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BY  
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## THE NATIVE RACES OF GERMAN EAST AFRICA

THE spread of German colonization in Africa is one of the most notable phenomena of the last thirty years. When Dr. Nachtigall, in 1884, hoisted the German flag over the Cameroons, after concluding his famous treaty with King Bell, the new departure was regarded with some amusement by those who believed that Germany was mainly devoted to philosophy, poetry and tobacco, and refused to take her seriously as a colonizing power.

To-day, her four African dependencies cover a total area of over two and a quarter million square kilometres, with a population (in 1908) of 14,120,000, of whom 16,635 were Europeans and 12,953 Germans.

Of these four territories—East Africa, South-West Africa, Kamerun, and Togo—the first is the largest, having an area of 995,000 square kilometres or 384,079 square miles. The native population, of over ten millions, represents a great variety of tribes showing endless differences of type and speech. The majority of these are Bantu, but besides these we have the Masai and Dorobo (who, like some of the Bantu tribes, are also found in British territory, to the northward), and the Wambugu, Wambulunge, Wataturu, Wasandia, and one or two others, whose affinities are as yet insufficiently investigated.

We have frequently had occasion to remark on the thorough way in which ethnographic research is carried out in the German colonies, and generously subsidised, if not entirely supported, by the State. Whether this is, in the end, better for science, and for the community in general, than leaving such things to private munificence and the exertions of learned societies, is a question which, happily, we are not

here called on to discuss. When the results of the system are exemplified as in the work before us,<sup>1</sup> or in the late Captain Merker's monumental *Die Masai*, or in the Government Museum at Berlin, or in the endowment of such lectures as those given by Dr. Thilenius at Hamburg—it would be invidious to quarrel with it.

Lieutenant Weiss's book is certainly a splendid production. He modestly attributes any merit it may possess to the photographs, which are certainly of unusual excellence; but the text—though written, by force of circumstances, within the space of a few months, bears abundant evidence of long study and careful research.

The author spent four years in Africa, being mainly occupied in surveying and mapping, so that he could only devote his scanty leisure to ethnography. In 1907–8 he acted as topographer to the Duke of Mecklenburg's expedition, till unfortunately invalided home in the latter year. The amount of notes and observations collected during this period testifies to his enthusiasm and energy in the pursuit of his favourite science.

The tribes dealt with in the volume under review are the Wahima or Watusi, the Wanyambo (also called Wapororo and Wahutu), the Waganda and Waheia, the Wageia, Bakulya, Masai and Wandorobo. A concluding chapter, illustrated by some exceedingly valuable photographs, is devoted to "Industries," including ironwork, wood-carving, basket-making, pottery, the making of bark-cloth, construction of huts and canoes, &c. The manufacture of the peculiar grass kilts and mantles worn by the Waheia (see illustration on p. 151, here reproduced), is described on p. 439; the process is shown in figs. 348, 349. An interesting division of labour between the sexes is mentioned in connection with pottery, which is here, as everywhere in Bantu Africa, a woman's industry, with the exception of pipe-bowl making, which is confined to men. It is to be noticed, in this connection, that baskets appear to be made by the women—which is not the

<sup>1</sup> *Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas*. Von Max Weiss, Oberlieutenant, kommandiert beim Reichskolonialamt. Berlin (Carl Marschner): 455 pp., with map, 21 plates, and 358 illustrations in the text.



MAN AND YOUTH OF THE BAHAYA TRIBE.

*To face p. 54.*





case with some other tribes, *e.g.*, the Anyanja. The author states that the more delicate articles, such as the water-tight baskets and ornamental lids made of fine grass, as well as the mats woven in patterns, are only made by the wives of chiefs, with their daughters and maid-servants. Perhaps the existence of such a leisured class among the women of Uganda explains the transference of the industry. Where it is entirely in the hands of the men, they practise it as a light, recreative occupation, their main business being war, the chase, or trading journeys, while the women have their time fully taken up with agriculture and looking after the household. The beginnings of specialisation are seen, *e.g.*, in Karagwe, Ankole, and Uganda, where the finer and more ornamental mats are made for sale by men who devote themselves exclusively to this work. But, in general, both mat-weaving and basket-making are household industries, not trades. In the illustrations on pp. 432, 433, various stages of this art are shown, as practised by a Muganda woman, a woman of the Bakulya, and two Waheia girls.

The names Waheia, Bakulya, and Wageia, are not to be found in Sir Harry Johnston's *Uganda Protectorate*, Mr. C. W. Hobley's *Eastern Uganda*, or Sir Charles Eliot's *East Africa Protectorate*. The country of Ugaya, however, is mentioned; and the name Geyeya seems to have been given to Stanley as designating the people living near Ugowe Bay (see Cust, *Modern Languages of Africa*, II., 380). They are, as a matter of fact, identical with the Bantu Kavirondo, or at least with the southern section of that tribe, called by Mr. Hobley the Awa-Ware. The Bakulya are the eastern neighbours of the Wageia, known to Sir Harry Johnston (*Uganda Protectorate*, p. 746) as the Abakisii or Abagizii. Lieutenant Weiss says:—

“East of Lake Victoria . . . we find the very attractive tribe of the Wageia, or, as the English wrongly call them, after the bay of the same name, Kavirondo. Even so conscientious an investigator as Sir Harry Johnston has retained this name, whose origin (as in many similar cases) may be explained by the fact that the Arab and Swahili trading caravans are in the habit of transferring the name of the country to the

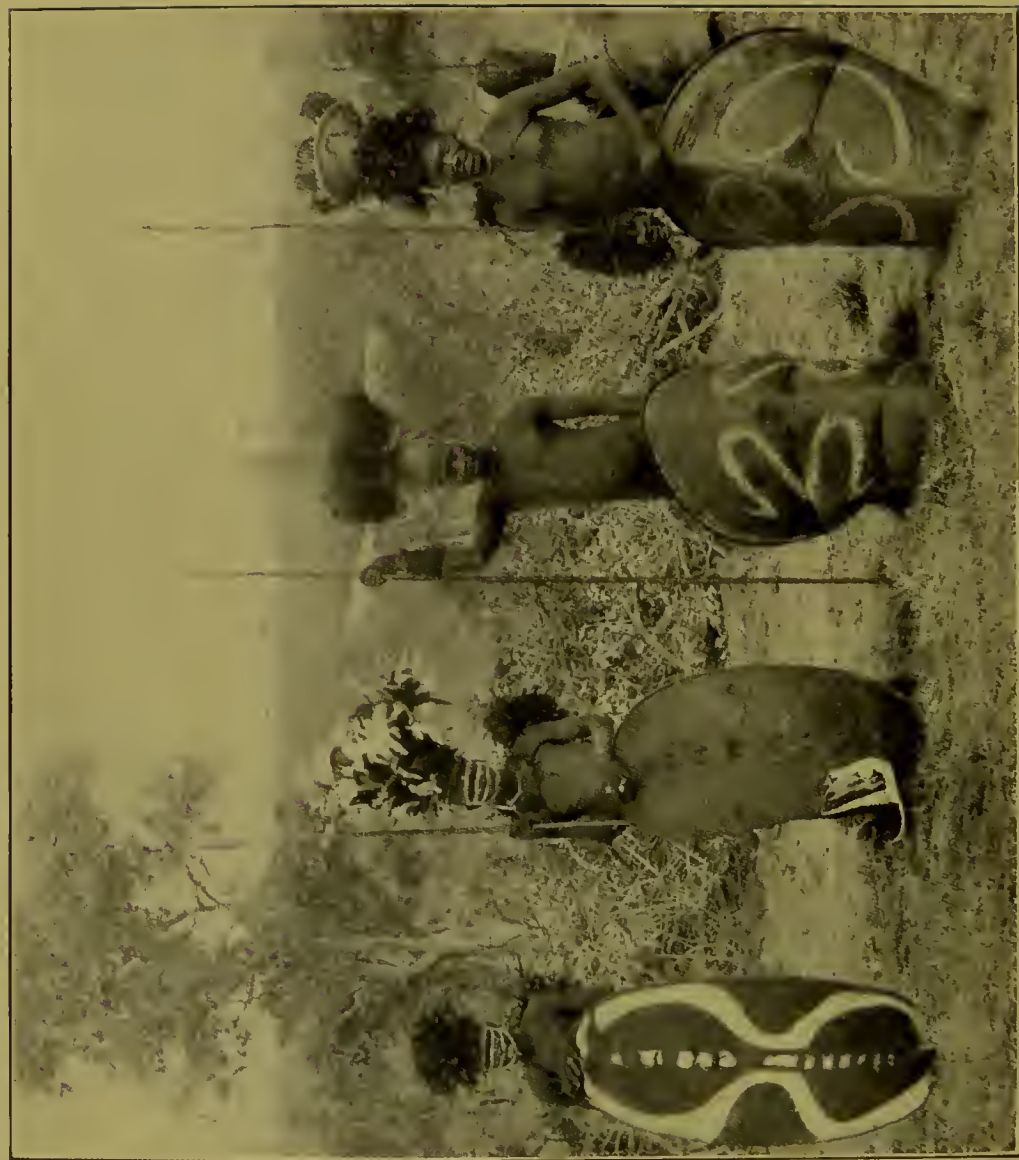
inhabitants. . . . Thomson, the first European to visit the country, in 1883, reckons the so-called Kavirondo among Bantu Negroes. Hobley at a later date introduced the term Jaluo (which I have never heard) for the Northern Kavirondo. In the immediate vicinity of Kisumu, the village elders, in answer to my repeated questions, said that they were Kavirondo—no doubt simply because this name had been suggested to them through many years of intercourse with Arabs, Swahilis, and Europeans. South of Kisumu, the only name I heard was Wageia, and several old chiefs have confirmed the statement that the real tribal name of the so-called Kavirondo is also Wageia. On the same occasion they told me that their people had come from the North many years ago, and were only immigrants into this country. Unfortunately, I had no time to make more detailed inquiries on this interesting point. This tradition fits in with the view of English travellers, that the Wageia are of Nilotic origin. There is yet another possibility, viz., that the Wageia people consist of two elements—a Nilotic in the northern part of the country, and a Bantu in the south.”

As the author refers to Mr. Hobley and Sir Harry Johnston, it seems strange that he should be apparently unaware of their having clearly recognised the distinction he alludes to (see also Sir Charles Eliot's *East African Protectorate*, p. 129); and he has also, somehow, overlooked the real bearing of the name Jaluo and its connection with the Aluru of the Nile. It was not to be expected that he should hear the name among the Bantu Wageia south of the German frontier. (We should probably be more correct in writing *Bagaya*.)

For the reader's convenience, we may remind him that this frontier runs in a straight line W.N.W. from Kilimanjaro, striking the lake shore just on the parallel of 18°, which is a few miles south of Karungu. The River Gori runs through British territory into Kuya Bay, and the Mori, south of the boundary-line, into Mori Bay. The line is drawn for convenience on the map and does not correspond with any natural features, and all the adjacent tribes are found on both sides of it. The Wageia are about equally divided between German and British territory, and extend south-







BAGAVA (KAVIRONDO) WARRIORS.

ward as far as the Mara River, while in the north their settlements reach nearly to the Nandi hills.

The author agrees with Sir Harry Johnston (and differs, if we remember rightly, from Sir Charles Eliot) in admiring the physique of the Wageia, who "possess symmetrical, well-built and vigorous forms—both men and women." The accompanying photographs, some of which were taken on the shores of Kavirondo Bay, others in the country to the south of it, are well calculated to emphasize the truth of this remark. We might single out as specially pleasing from an artistic point of view, Nos. 140, 141, 159, and 163.

As is sufficiently well known, the Wageia wear less clothing than perhaps any other African race, with the exception of some tribes on the White Nile. This characteristic was pointed out long ago by Joseph Thomson, who says, in *Through Masai Land* (p. 287):—

"About the Wakavirondo it remains but to be said that they eloquently illustrate the fact, which some people cannot understand, that morality has nothing to do with clothes. They are the most moral of all the tribes of this region, and they are simply angels of purity beside the decently dressed Masai." Lieutenant Weiss (see p. 193) fully agrees with this estimate.

But it is also well known that absence of clothing by no means implies absence of ornaments, and the Wageia—the men at least—are no exception to this rule. Lieutenant Weiss has secured some good photographs of the wonderful hats with which they adorn themselves—see pp. 185 (the figure on the right), 189, 191. These illustrations, as well as that on p. 187 (which is here reproduced), also show other extraordinary structures of plumes, basket-work and beads. The head-dress of the man on the left of Fig. 141 (p. 191), with its curved, horn-like appendages, is specially remarkable and very picturesque.

Of other decorations, the author says:—"Round the upper arm and the wrist, and also round the ankle and just below the knee, and even, frequently, round the neck, they wear spiral coils of thick iron wire, the outside of which always looks clean and bright, as it is polished up daily with a small

stone. What the inside looks like can be imagined, as the cleaning does not extend to this, and the coil, once put on, is never removed during the wearer's lifetime. It is not every man who knows how to fasten on the wire in these symmetrical coils, but only professional artists, of whom there is never more than one in a village."

We fail to understand the remark about the inside of the coils, for, unless they were so tightly fastened as to be immovable—in which case they would surely cause serious injury—they would keep bright by friction, as every woman who has worn bangles will understand.

The curious war-paint in Fig. 143 should be noticed, as also the goat-skins worn by the men in Figs. 146 and 147. These are not clothing in any practical sense, but are nevertheless extremely important. No married man who is the father of a child may ever appear before his mother-in-law without this appendage—to do so would give deadly offence. If he has taken to European clothing, he still wears the goat-skin under it.

The Baganda dealt with in this book are those living in the German part of Buddu Province, along the course of the Kagera River, which divides them from the country known as Kiziba. The principal chief of this part is Ruikika, who is photographed, with his court, on Plate vii. (facing p. 144). The general account of the Baganda agrees, on the whole, with those of other authorities; but it is a little surprising to find Lieutenant Weiss saying (p. 148) that Luganda (or, as he calls it, Swahili-fashion, Kiganda) is "not akin to Lunyoro" (*mit dem Kinjorro nicht verwandt*). Everything depends, however, on the meaning which the author attaches to the word *verwandt*. He may intend to say merely that they are distinct languages—as Spanish and Portuguese are distinct—in which case, there is, of course, no room for criticism.

The people whom he calls "Waheia" (Bahaya?)<sup>1</sup> inhabit

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Weiss writes "Waheia," no doubt, in accordance with the usual German orthography; but, if we may judge from the analogy of Ugaya, which is the country of his "Wageia," the sound would be more correctly rendered by the spelling Wa-ha-ya (or Ba-ha-ya). Stanley calls them "Wahya."

Kiziba, and appear to be those described by Mr. J. F. Cunningham as "Ba-ziba." Captain Herrmann, who made a study of the language as long ago as 1897, says that the real name of the people is Ba-tundu, and that, as they had no special name for their language ("*einen eigentlichen Namen für die Sprache gibt es nicht*"), he coined the word Luziba, after the analogy of Luganda, from the name of the country. But, as that is Kiziba and not Buziba, one wonders whether the root is really *-ziba*, and why he could not have adopted the name Lutundu. Lieutenant Weiss says, "We find two names for the population—Waziba, from their country, and Waheia. The latter is the more usual designation—in fact, it was, with rare exceptions, the only one I ever heard used in the country itself." It is possible, therefore, that "Waziba" may be an imported appellation, as he says elsewhere of the name "Kavirondo": They are described as "a careless, frank, always happy people," in physical type not unlike the Baganda, and "unquestionably the best-looking aboriginal race of people west of Lake Victoria." The peculiar grass (or palm-fibre) kilts and capes worn by the men are well shown on pp. 150, 151.<sup>1</sup> They are both cultivators and cattle-breeders, their principal crop being, as in Uganda, the banana, which supplies them, not only with food and beer, but with fibre for cordage, and soap. The latter is made by burning the peel of unripe bananas, making lye of the ashes and boiling with beef fat. But the juice of the banana would appear to possess some cleansing property in itself, as pieces of the freshly-cut stem are used to rub down the body when washing, as the fibre of the Agave (American aloe) is in Mexico.

The author speaks highly of the love for cleanliness shown, not only by the Waheia, but also by the Baganda, who wash both themselves and their clothing with praiseworthy regularity. On p. 167 we have a view of his Waheia carriers, bathing in the lake.

In discussing the funeral customs of the Waheia, Lieutenant Weiss says that, while the corpses of commoners are thrown out into the bush, or, occasionally, buried within

<sup>1</sup> The second of these illustrations is reproduced opposite p. 57.



the hut they had inhabited in their lifetime—chiefs and men of rank are interred in caves on the island of Busira, near Bukoba. This “Island of the Dead” was, in 1875, visited by Stanley, who calls it “Musira,” and—naturally enough, since he does not seem to have been informed of the use to which it was put—concluded that it had been the scene of a tragedy:—

“After great difficulty I succeeded in getting upon the top of a portion of an upper ledge that had fallen on the north-east corner and now formed a separate projection about 30 feet high. In a cavernous recess upon the summit of it, I discovered six human bodies in a state of decomposition, half covered with grass and *débris* of rock. One of the skulls showed the mark of a hatchet, which made me suspect that a tragedy had occurred here but a short time before. No doubt the horrible event took place on the island on the ground occupied by our camp, for there was no other spot where such a deed could have been wrought, and probably the victims were taken in canoes and deposited in this hidden recess, that strangers might not be alarmed at the sight of the bodies. . . . Probably, also, these strangers were murdered for their cargo of coffee or butter by the natives of the mainland, or by a later arrival of strangers like my own Waganda. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

On the occasion of a burial at Busira the corpse is sewn up in skins or bark-cloth, then wrapped in mats and laid on a bier. The people carry it down to the beach, singing, and take it over in a canoe to the island, where it is simply left in a cave. The anthropologist of the Duke of Mecklenburg’s expedition was able to make valuable additions to his collection of skulls at Busira.

The two principal chiefs of Kiziba are Mutahangarua and Kahigi, both of whom appear to be on the best of terms with the German Administration. The former has devoted his energies successfully to the acquisition of the Teutonic language, the *facsimile* letter given on p. 177 showing that, so long ago as 1904, he had made very creditable progress. Three years later he was living in a neat house, built of

<sup>1</sup> *Through the Dark Continent*, p. 144.

bricks made and burnt by his own people, and roofed (alas!) with corrugated iron. He had also acquired some European furniture—among other things, two wardrobes, which stood wide open for inspection, each containing a beautifully ironed white suit.

Two other tribes on the western side of Lake Victoria are dealt with in this book: the Wahima, or Watussi—identical with the Bahima of Ankole, described by Major Meldon in a former number of this Journal,<sup>1</sup> and their subjects or vassals, the Wanyambo, who in Mpororo are called Wapororo and in Ruanda Wahutu. They are the aborigines of the country, and no doubt the same people as the Banyankole, of whom Major Meldon says, "they are the original inhabitants [of Ankole], who were conquered by the Bahima and have since been treated as slaves." The Bahima call them "Bairo," which means "slaves." Both tribes are divided between British and German territory.

Lieutenant Weiss's frontispiece shows a splendid type of Mhima head. The full-length figure of the same man (the "Sultan" Kisilerobo) on p. 21, calls for special notice, and we may also direct the reader's attention to the young girls in Plate iii. and the charming children on p. 52.

One of the most interesting passages in the chapter on the Bahima is the account of the two women chiefs, or rather priestesses, Nyawingi and Mumusa (pp. 56-67). Both of these are believed to represent the spirit Nyawingi.<sup>2</sup> There is said to be another in the Congo State. These ladies are supposed never to be seen by any one but their confidential attendant or "prime minister," and never leave their residences unless closely veiled. Nyawingi sent a message to Emin Pasha when he passed through Mpororo in 1892, asking for an interview with him, but intimating at the same time that she must not be seen and could only speak to him from behind a curtain. The Pasha declined to come on these conditions, and the first Europeans to visit Nyawingi appear

<sup>1</sup> January, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Major Meldon says: "The Nyabingi, a she-devil who makes her presence known by earthquakes, is worshipped by the Bairo in parts of Ankole" (*loc. cit.*, p. 143).

to have been Lieutenant Weiss and Captain Schlobach, who succeeded in overcoming her scruples—even to such a degree that she consented to be photographed (see p. 74). At the first interview she endeavoured to impress her visitors by speaking in falsetto tones in order to personate the spirit, and did her best, but without success, to enlist their support in a quarrel with her neighbours. Mumusa, who was subsequently visited, did the same, but, on the whole, she made a much more favourable impression than Nyawingi. She was a tall, finely-formed woman, with beautiful brown eyes and well-cut features, behaved with great courtesy and dignity, and seemed to have much more authority over her people than her colleague. She allowed herself to be photographed in the round basket which serves Bahima ladies as a litter—her Prime Minister lifting her veil to show her face—as seen in Plate iv.

The author is inclined to think that the majority of the Bahima have no faith in Nyawingi, but keep up the cult because of the influence it gives them over the much more superstitious Bairo.

Turning once more to the region east of Lake Victoria, we find, in addition to the Bagaya, already mentioned, the Bakulya, the Masai, and the Wandorobo. About the last two so much has been written in English that they need not now detain us, but the Bakulya are less well-known. Sir Harry Johnston<sup>1</sup> calls them “a group of Bantu-speaking people of Masai ‘culture’ hitherto almost entirely undescribed, but possibly connected with the people whom the present reviewer styled the Ba-gisii.” Up to the time of the British-German Boundary Commission in 1904, only a few Europeans had come even into the slightest contact with them. These passing visitors gave them the erroneous name of “Wasuba,” which is explained by the fact that some of them live in a district called Busuba, about a day’s march from the Lake and repeatedly traversed by Europeans. The tribe as a whole occupies the hill-country between the Gori and Mara rivers, embracing, besides Busuba, the districts of Bumira, Butende, Buriedi, Bunyari,

<sup>1</sup> Review in *Geographical Journal* for July, 1910, p. 85.

Chamwita, Utimbaru, Unyawási, and Bwirege. Their western neighbours are the Bagaya, who inhabit a strip about 50 miles wide, extending along the Lake shore.

The Bakulya have suffered much from the raids of the Masai, and their fortified villages are, therefore, so well hidden, that a stranger may pass close by them without being aware of their existence. They have copied, to a great extent, the costumes and weapons of the Masai, apparently in the hope of thus acquiring some of the prestige of these formidable warriors and being able to hold their own against them. In spite of this imitateness, they show a warlike and independent spirit and seem to have given a certain amount of trouble to the Boundary Commission. Space will not allow us to make any further quotations from the very interesting chapter devoted to this tribe. Like all the rest of the book, it is very fully illustrated—the author having been eminently successful in securing good types of Bakulya of all ages and both sexes. The two women with babies in Plate xv. are specially good, and we may also note the curious costumes of initiated youths and girls on pp. 286, 287, 291, 282, 295.

We have only touched on a few of the most interesting points in a work to which space will not allow of our doing full justice, but which is certainly one of the best that has appeared on the subject.

A. WERNER.





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